

Release of Dutch slaves in Algiers

July 1612: Sultan Ahmed I grants Capitulations to the United Provinces which includes the provision for freeing Dutch prisoners and slaves being held in Ottoman territories including Tunis & Algiers. Achieved through the work of Cornelis Haga who was sent to Constantinople by the States General as a special envoy to negotiate for this agreement; he was later appointed as Ambassador and spent 27 years there.

The Capitulations were strenuously opposed by the diplomatic corps from England, France & the Venetian Republic who, having failed in that endeavor, relegated Haga to the status of outsider and denied the very existence of the Dutch Consular office. Withholding recognition meant the English, Venetians, and French continued to collect the consular fees directly from Dutch merchants; it was up to the Dutch to enforce their rights by whatever means at their disposal. At the time, it was customary for all nations of the diplomatic corps to contribute to a fund that paid for the gifts, receptions, balls, dinners &c that were given as a expected, if not demanded, custom to high-ranking officials. The English Ambassador Bon presented Haga with a bill for the share expected from the United Provinces for a single event of 16,000 ducats which was 7,000 higher than Haga had been told to expect. Suspecting the legitimacy of the bill but not wanting to jeopardize what little status he had (merely being asked to shoulder some of the costs was an informal recognition of the nation's status), it was forwarded to the States General for payment either with or soon followed by a letter of caution as Bon was not trustworthy. Accordingly, the States General made Bon substantiate every guilder for any bill he submitted with documentation. Haga was correct in his suspicions – a later investigation revealed that Bon was a thief – whether or not he was robbing other nations on the order of the Stuart monarchy, as part of the diplomatic corps attempts to sideline the Netherlands, or for his own financial gain is not certain – he fleeced several nations of hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Besides this opposition, the Grand Vizier Nasua Pasha, opposed the Dutch Capitulations because he felt they were invalid since he was on a military campaign in Hungary when they were negotiated. This excuse could be valid since the Grand Vizier's duties included overseeing such negotiations but, before he left on campaign, he had designated Halil Pasha as his Deputy-Grand Vizier who did have the authority to conduct the negotiations on his behalf. Whether or not the final proposal required the Grand Vizier to sign off on it became the point of contention, with the Dutch-Halil coalition winning. Nasua was merely doing the work required to continue to receive the *tribute* levied on nations which was supplemented by sizeable bribes to sabotage the negotiations he received from the three named countries to defeat the Dutch.

Copies of the Capitulations accompanied by an Imperial decree requiring the adherence to the capitulations by Tunis and Algiers was sent to the viceroys and commanders of the Janissary corps of each place in August 1612. Süleyman Pasha was the viceroy of Algiers in 1612 and in 1617 when he was ordered to attend a conference in Constantinople to

effect the enforcement of the terms as no slaves had been released after 5 years. The declarations signed between 17 and 26 May 1617 called for the nations to respect the others ships on the high seas and to obey Imperial decrees. The signatories included Haga, Süleyman, and the head of the Algiers Janissary corps.

The Capitulations did not result in a release of captives from Algiers which was a major factor in the declaration of war on the regency by the allied states of the United Provinces and Spain. The reason given by the Viceroy was that the agreement was based on reciprocity and the Dutch had captured ships and taken prisoners from those ships that were from Algiers. The Regency would be a willing participant once the Dutch restored all prisoners and made appropriate financial compensation to the ship owners.

The Dutch-Algerian War lasted from 1618 to 1622. By the end of the war in 1622, no slaves had been released which should have been expected by all parties as Dutch nationals were the declared enemy and, as such, all were placed under house arrest for the duration. This was the episode which Jan described three years later as being held captive in Algiers and forced to convert, neither of which was true. He was initially stopped from heading back to Morocco but the entreaties of Sultan Zaydan soon affected his release. Jan fabricated this story in 1621 because, if he could prove to the States General satisfaction, that he was a captive and had been coerced into converting within the past three years, he could reclaim his status as a Dutch national without any hindrance. He was further aided in this goal by a Dutch law stipulating that citizens of Spain prior to 1610 were automatically granted full citizenship on request in the new Republic. The impact to Jan was negligible as he had no intentions to relocate to the provinces but the effect on us was enormous for there would be no 'us' without it. Once his citizenship status had been established, his children became citizens of the Dutch Republic, just as any child born today to a United States citizen anywhere in the world is automatically considered to be a U.S. citizen. This was the mechanism through which Anthony moved to Amsterdam in the mid-1620s before heading to the New Netherland colony in 1629.